

External Quality Assurance

Programmes Audit Report

MALTA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Carried out on
4th and 6th December 2023

Programmes Audited:

Undergraduate Certificate in Inclusive Education
Undergraduate Diploma in Inclusive Education

**Quality education for
confident futures.**

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Abbreviations List

ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EQA/QA audit	External Quality Assurance Audit
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
MFHEA	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority
MLI	Malta Leadership Institute
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
NQAF	National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education
SAR	Self-Assessment Report

Executive Summary

Institutional Background

The licence of Malta Leadership Institute (MLI) was awarded on 24th February 2018 under Leadership Consultancy and Training Services (LCTS), which was incorporated as a Partnership under the Malta Business Registry with P1584. During the first year of operations, MLI recruited a number of students, but the following year, that is 2019, it saw an exponential increase in student numbers due to a particular course for Learning Support Educators (LSEs), namely, the Top-up Bachelor in Education (Facilitating and Adapting Education for Students with Diverse Needs). This led the management of LCTS, and thus MLI, to convert the Partnership to a Registered Company and was incorporated with no C92852.

MLI's initial focus was to offer accredited courses leading to the profession of Learning Support Educator and thus establishing the Education Department within MLI, while slowly it expanded to two other sectors, that of Business and the Health and Social Care Department. Between 2018 and 2021 was a fast-expanding process where it saw MLI developing into a fully-fledged tertiary education institution with three main departments that will be three main sectors that MLI will be focusing on: Education, Business and Health and Holistic Wellbeing sectors.

Overview of the Audit Process

This report is a result of the External Quality Assurance process undertaken by an independent peer review panel. The panel evaluated the documentation submitted by the educational institution and conducted an onsite and also online audit visit. The panel is responsible for reaching conclusions on all Standards within the evaluation areas set out in the Procedures for Programme Audits in Further and Higher Education Institutions. Through this report, the panel also highlighted areas of good practice which, in its view, make a positive contribution to academic standards and quality of education that are worthy of being emulated and disseminated more widely.

The programme audit processes were carried out with the aim to evaluate areas set out in the Procedures for Programme Audits in Further and Higher Education Institutions which group the 11 Standards of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (NQAF) as follows:

Section A - Design and Development of Programme of Study

Section B - Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Section C - Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Section D - Teaching Staff

Section E - Learning Resources and Student Support

Section F - Information Management

Section G - Public Information

Timeline

The panel meetings were conducted both online and at the premises of MLI on 4th and 6th December 2023.

The visit took place according to the following schedules:

Day 1: 4th December

Venue: Online – via Zoom

Brief introduction by Chair of the panel.

Meeting with the owner and coordinator of MLI. Presentation on QA policy and processes at MLI. This presentation addressed the quality processes, procedures and guidelines at MLI and the organisational chart with a focus on the representative of the Program Quality and Validation Board. This Board is comprised of two people, the owner and a full-time employer/academic assurance responsible.

Day 2: 6th December

Venue: MLI premises

Brief introduction by Chair of the panel.

Meeting with two lecturers of 20- and 30-week courses.

Meeting with Administrative staff/IT/Registrar, Student Services who presented aspects related to academic management – register of students, students support services, student counselling, teachers' CPD opportunities, quality assurance issues.

Even though there were established meetings with alumni and students, there was no one presented and the panel could not have a perspective from these actors.

Meeting with the coordinator.

About the External Quality Audit

Aims and Objectives of the EQA

Quality assurance in Malta is underpinned by six principles that determine the remit and function of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (the Framework, hereafter), and the relationship between internal and external quality assurance to enhance learning outcomes.

- i. The Framework is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and enriched by the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) perspective.
- ii. The Framework contributes to a national culture of quality through:
 - increased agency satisfaction and numbers of service users,
 - an enhanced international profile and credibility of providers in Malta, and
 - the promotion of Malta as a regional provider of excellence in further and higher education.
- iii. The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is fit for purpose.
- iv. The External Quality Assurance (QA audit) is a tool for both development and accountability. The QA audit shall ensure that the internal quality management system of the provider is:
 - fit for purpose according to the provider's courses and service users,
 - compliant with standards and regulations and contributing to the development of a national quality culture,
 - contributing to the fulfilment of the broad goals of Malta's Education Strategy 2014-24,
 - implemented with effectiveness, comprehensiveness and sustainability.
- v. The Quality Improvement Cycle is at the heart of the Framework.
- vi. The integrity and independence of the QA audit process is guaranteed.

The QA audit provides assurance to the public that the Standards of further and higher education programmes and the quality of the learning experience of students are high. It presents an opportunity for providers to demonstrate that they adhere to the expectations of stakeholders with regard to the programmes of study that they offer and the achievements and capabilities of their students. It also provides a focus for identifying good practices and for the implementation of institutional approaches to the continuous improvement in the quality of educational provision.

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) has a responsibility to ensure that a comprehensive assessment is conducted for all higher education providers in Malta. The QA audit provides an opportunity to assess the standards and quality of higher education in Malta with reference to the expectations and practices of provision across the European Higher Education Area and internationally.

The QA audit examines how providers manage their own responsibilities for the quality and standards of the programmes they offer. In particular, the following aspects are addressed:

- The fitness for purpose and effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes, including an examination of the systems and procedures that have been implemented and the documentation that supports them.
- The compliance with the obligations of license holders with established regulations and any conditions or restrictions imposed by the MFHEA.
- The governance and financial sustainability of providers, including assurances about the legal status of the provider, the appropriateness of corporate structures and the competence of staff with senior management responsibilities.

The programme audit is carried out in line with the evaluation areas set out in the Procedures for Programme Audits in Further and Higher Education Institutions which group the 11 Standards of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (NQAF) as follows:

Section A – Design and Development of Programme of Study (Standards 1, 2, 3 and 10)

Section B – Student-Centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Standard 4)

Section C – Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification (Standard 5)

Section D – Teaching Staff (Standards 2 and 6)

Section E – Learning Resources and Student Support (Standards 3 and 7)

Section F – Information Management (Standards 8 and 10)

Section G – Public Information (Standards 1, 2, 9 and 11)

The NQAF Standards that were further analysed included:

1. Policy for quality assurance: entities shall have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.
2. Institutional and financial probity: entities shall ensure that they have appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure institutional and financial probity.

3. Design and approval of programmes: self-accrediting providers shall have appropriate processes for the design and approval of their programmes of study.
4. Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment: entities shall ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.
5. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: entities shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle'.
6. Teaching staff: entities shall assure the competence and effectiveness of their teaching staff.
7. Learning resources and student support: entities shall have appropriate funding for their learning and teaching activities and sufficient learning resources to fully support the students' learning experiences.
8. Information management: entities shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.
9. Public information: entities shall publish information about their activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up to date and readily accessible.
10. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes: entities shall implement the 'Quality Cycle' by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose.
11. Cyclical external quality assurance: entities should undergo an external quality assurance by, or with the approval of, the MFHEA on a cyclical basis, according to the MFHEA guidelines, once every five years.

The approach of the QA audit is not simply about checking whether providers adhere to the regulations; it examines how providers are developing their own systems in addressing the expectations of sound management of educational standards and the quality of their learning and teaching provision. It does not involve the routine identification and confirmation of criteria – a 'tick-box' approach – but rather a mature and reflective dialogue with providers about the ways in which they discharge their obligations for quality and the identification of existing good practices.

The Peer Review Panel

The peer review panel was composed of:

Chair of Review Panel:	Dr Robert Cassar PhD
Peer Reviewers:	Dr Elena Marin PhD Ms Marjoe Abela
Student Peer Reviewer:	Mr Matthew Kitching
QA Managers (MFHEA):	Mr Giacomo Annese Ms Bilyana Boshova

Summary of the Conclusions Reached by the Peer Review Panel

On the basis of the findings documented in the report, the panel has concluded that MLI meets Sections C, E, F and G, requires improvement in Section D and does not meet requirements in Section A and B. The recommendations in this report are meant to improve the standards already in place and to enhance good practice.

The panel made its recommendations exclusively relying on the documents provided by MLI and the onsite visits that involved only management and academic personnel. As there were no students or stakeholders present during these visits, the panel views these recommendations as being narrowly focused.

Specific Terms of Reference

The review team decided that, as part of an enhancement-led approach, it would issue recommendations linked to all parts of the operations of the institution. The report therefore distinguishes between:

- Mandatory recommendations (MR) which are crucial to meet a Standard and **shall** be implemented within the timeframes decided by the panel and indicated in this report.

- Key recommendations (KR) which are important to improve a standard and which **should** be implemented expediently by the institution, within the indicated timeframes, to address weaknesses.
- Recommendations (R) for improvement which are merely suggestions based on the panel's analysis and observations; these **could** be implemented by the institution.

The panel made 13 Mandatory Recommendations and 7 Keys Recommendations. The panel also made 12 Recommendations which the institution can choose to work on.

Institutional Context

Malta Leadership Institute (MLI) prioritises delivering accredited and non-accredited courses that fulfil the needs of the clients and society. It makes sure to provide learning programmes tailored for individuals entering the job market and those aspiring to advance their careers.

MLI strives to give equitable opportunities and services to all those individuals who wish to start and continue their studies and thus, while developing their potential, they can achieve their self-actualisation.

MLI takes over the responsibility of offering the best tailor-made educational possibilities to students who want to continue to study while achieving their goals.

In a professional and continuous manner, MLI strives to offer the highest quality educational services through research, learning, networking and other self-development opportunities to enhance the development of the human being in all aspects of life aiming at achieving the person's well-being.

Objectives

- to provide high quality educational qualifications in the fields of Education, Business, and Health and Holistic Wellbeing, achieving Excellence as the Mediterranean Educational Hub;
- to support students through teaching, coaching, mentoring and counselling to achieve an academic qualification and actualise their dreams;
- to research themes of local and international interest which contribute and bring change in the fields of Education, Business, and Health and Holistic Wellbeing;
- to provide staff (lecturers and administrative staff) and students with local and international opportunities to continue to develop their skills and enhance their capabilities;
- to apply for EU and non-EU funded projects to enhance the operations of MLI;
- to create and support projects for the benefit of organisations with a social or non-social aim in the fields of Education, Business, and Health and Holistic Wellbeing.

Analysis and Findings of Panel

Section A - Design and Development of Programme of Study

A1 Policy for Quality Assurance

Main Findings

Despite the fact that the panel was informed that the institution has a Quality Assurance Policy in place, MLI failed to provide evidence of this to the team at any stage in the audit process, including during the site visit itself. Nevertheless, the panel noted that MLI has recently started to implement a rudimentary Quality Assurance System to ensure continuous quality monitoring, assurance and improvement. The panel did find evidence of newly established processes, such as one aimed at internal verification, which could legitimately form part of a comprehensive and coherent system of internal quality assurance. However, at the current time, this is not sufficiently well developed nor is it being implemented, and the panel considers substantially more needs to be done in this area of activity.

According to the MLI representatives themselves, the Quality Assurance (QA) strategy is currently at a basic level and needs further development. The panel was informed that employees and students were involved in the process. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the level of students' involvement in the current QA system consists only on providing feedback through surveys, but not being actively involved in the process of QA. While this is a step in the right direction for the institution, key stakeholders need to be more directly involved in the quality management process at multiple levels: from the programme level to the institutional one. The panel noted that, indeed, lecturers and students are slightly involved in the process of implementing new programmes and reviewing the existing ones. Evidence and degree of this involvement, however, was not provided.

The panel was informed that QA meetings take place once every two weeks, but there is no evidence that the QA Policy and/or internal mechanisms have been presented and/or discussed during those meetings.

The Quality Assurance Policy is not documented in a Quality Assurance Manual/Strategy, that is crucial for serving as the guiding document for all quality management activities and provides the binding framework for all quality management activities. The panel notes that this document needs to be made publicly available on the MLI website.

The panel was informed that MLI conducts surveys for students at the end of the modules, but it was not provided with any evidence that supports this evidence. Also, no evidence has been put forward that MLI conducts and/or collects feedback from educational institutions on their satisfaction levels with MLI students and graduates.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR1: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, distribute roles related to QA (in particular, assign a QA coordinator). The QA Department shall ensure that the roles, responsibilities and authority are also visible in documented processes and academic bodies.
- MR2: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, refocus the main responsibility of the QA Department from ensuring MFHEA accreditation to an ongoing, internal QA improvement process that will enable future improvements in QA.
- KR1: The QA Manager should be supported by specialised personnel. The resulting department/unit should continue to report to the head of the institution. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.
- MR3: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, design, develop and maintain a system for internal QA forms and processes.
- R1: MLI should consider introducing a process whereby feedback is collected from educational institutions about their satisfaction level with MLI's students and graduates.

A2 Design and Development of Programme

Main Findings

The panel determined that the anticipated student workload in ECTS requires adjustment, as one ECTS is not accounted for in the programme for the 30-week course. This was highlighted in the documentation provided, where the panel identified a discrepancy in the description of the 30-week course, i.e., a total of 29 ECTS instead of 30 ECTS. When meeting with representatives from the institution, they cleared this up as being a human mistake and undertook a commitment to resolve the issue by making the necessary modification both on the official website and on the documentation provided to the panel.

The panel found it difficult, throughout the audit process, to identify clear operational procedures for the design and development of programmes. In practice, the 20- and 30-week courses were developed five years ago, and due to the limited number of staff and stakeholders the panel met and in the absence of clear written procedures, it proved difficult to ascertain MLI's arrangements for the consistent and rigorous design of its programmes.

The panel also noted that only internal stakeholders were involved in the design and development of programmes. There is no evidence that external stakeholders have been made partners in this process. The panel also noted that there are some noticeable limitations to the current programme, such as the fact that students are not adequately prepared for secondary institutions as well as their lack of adaptation skills when preparing materials for the students in their care. The panel was informed that, for the most part, courses emphasise the theoretical component to the detriment of the more applied/hands-on parts. Both the Certificate and Diploma programmes incorporate a robust practical component which aids considerably with the mastery of skills and competencies essential for the respective roles. This practical aspect is evaluated through a work placement in a school, providing the learner with the opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge. The Certificate programme requires a minimum of 200 hours of placement, while the Diploma programme extends to 180 hours. In the case of the latter, learners are also expected to create a placement file and a self-development logbook which incorporates the tasks undertaken during the placement with their students plus self-development self-reflections on their goals, ensuring the assimilation of course content and the ability to reflect on encountered situations. It is worth noting that, given the sensitive nature of practicum situations, significant emphasis is placed on maintaining the confidentiality of professional dialogues between tutors and learners.

In addition to that, the units' content is not only tailored to meet the programmes' needs but is also structured to facilitate a seamless progression for learners from one unit to the next. Programme scheduling is carefully planned, allowing successful candidates to transition smoothly from one programme to another upon completing the preceding one. As learners advance through units and programmes, the skills and competencies addressed become increasingly complex and in-depth.

In general, the panel observed a consistent alignment among the programmes' learning outcomes, the employed assessment methods, and the adopted learning and teaching strategies.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR4: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, institutionalise the role of an Academic Manager with full authority and responsibility.
- KR2: The individual modules/courses of the programmes should address all required learning objectives defined for the programmes overall. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.
- KR3: The programmes' goals/learning outcomes and learning objectives should follow and reflect national and international good practices. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.
- MR5: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, redesign the programmes' learning goals and learning outcomes together with the development of clear road-mapping for each module for students' suggested pathway for the programmes.

A3 Internal Review – Monitoring and Periodic Review

Main Findings

As noted under Standard A2, the programmes were both written five years ago. Currently, the institution does not operate a consistent, periodic review of its programmes. Instead, teaching staff conduct independent reviews on their own teaching module content as they deem fit.

Lecturers spoke to the panel about their commitment to reviewing teaching and learning materials and the importance of maintaining subject currency. Despite this, the panel found no systematic institutional process for ensuring that the whole of the 20- and 30-week programmes remained coherent, continued to meet sector needs, and were of sufficient quality for students.

An 'open' communication was presented as being the strategy for internal monitoring and review process implemented at MLI. MLI tends to use informal communication with and between lecturers, staff and students. The panel believes that this approach, while utilitarian, is not sufficient. An over-reliance on ad hoc, informal communication runs the risk of inconsistency of action and response by MLI on matters which require the institution's continuous attention. MLI's staff explained to the panel that this situation is, in part, due to the limited human resources available at the institution. During interviews, members of staff

acknowledged themselves that consistent and robust procedures for monitoring and periodic review need to be developed.

Good Practice Identified

- Lecturers are seen as key actors in developing the programme.

Recommendations for Improvement

MR6: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop and implement consistent and robust annual monitoring and periodic review processes for module content.

MR7: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop a formal based approach to formally capture the feedback from all parties involved.

MR8: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, implement a communication strategy and mechanisms for support for both teachers and students.

R2: MLI could take into consideration the constant updating of the content of the modules.

Conclusion

MLI does not meet the requirements of Section A.

Section B – Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment

B1 Teaching and Learning Strategies

Main Findings

The panel met only two members of the teaching staff who, together, team-teach on a single module. Consequently, the panel was not able to gather evidence from a representative sample of lecturers, in order to assess with any certainty where there are standard practices in operation across the institution. The evidence presented to the panel was too limited in this regard. The interviewed lecturers explained their personal approach to maintaining subject currency and maintaining up-to-date teaching and learning resources. The panel acknowledged that the approach in use by lecturers is appropriate and conducive to a positive learning experience.

However, the panel was concerned about the exclusive reliance on online teaching to deliver both the 20- and 30-week courses. The panel considers that even taking account of innovative teaching approaches, it is not possible to effectively introduce the full range of practical techniques needed for LSEs in an online only modality. Therefore, while this mode may provide a good fit for students seeking flexible learning pathways due to work and other commitments, it is difficult to reconcile this against their long-term interests as specialist professionals and the interests of the vulnerable children that they will ultimately go on to support.

The panel notes that learning and teaching strategies at MLI indicate a fusion of traditional and more contemporary approaches. Both 20- and 30-week programmes employ pedagogical approaches that relatively strike a balance between traditional norms and innovative techniques.

The evaluation panel observed that MLI puts an emphasis primarily on student-centric learning in its teaching strategies. Teaching staff at MLI showed a strong commitment to student learning, noting the institution's clear focus on putting students at the centre.

The type of instruction at MLI is characterised by an element of interactivity. Lecturers integrate case studies to bridge as much as possible theory with practice, while leveraging digital tools like the e-learning platform, digital library, and technology in classrooms. MLI adopts, for the most part, a theoretical type of input, and slightly active learning patterns that typically encourage students to participate more actively in their educational journey.

On the other hand, the panel was presented with no evidence on student feedback channels such as surveys, regular meetings, open communication policies, and student representatives that can ensure student perspectives are valued and considered.

The panel noted the lack of contribution from guest lecturers and alumni in the modules. The panel recommends that MLI explore means to invite practitioners, alumni and employers to engage with students in the classroom in order to develop a rapport between students and future employers.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

MR9: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, collect feedback from the students in order to assess the quality of teaching.

R3: MLI could ensure that the online modality is being reflected upon. Indeed the institution could reflect on whether the online modality serves students' learning needs and those of the indirect beneficiaries – the pupils.

B2 Student Assessment

Main Findings

The institution operates a relatively restricted assessment strategy that relies predominantly on Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) examinations. MLI also makes use of short question assignments where students are able to select questions to answer from a predetermined list. Teaching staff view the short question format as more practically orientated and students need to draw on examples from their practice to describe how they would address certain scenarios.

Lecturers from one module described the use of a presentation in classes, where students provide an overview of their intended approach to assessment. Staff use this to provide formative feedback on the proposal to help students refine their focus and approach.

The institution has recently devised a template pro forma for use during internal moderation. Internal verifiers sample 30% of assessed work in each module, using a distribution across the grade range. The panel was provided with completed examples and considered the development to be positive with respect to quality assurance. However, the examples provided also contained evidence of marking that the internal verifier deemed to be out of line with the assessment rubric. The panel identified that, currently, the institution has no established process for correcting marks during moderation to ensure that assessment outcomes are fair and that no student is awarded a mark that is either too lenient or too punitive. The panel took note that there is a rubric for assignment purposes, but it is not used to give feedback. The institution acknowledges the need to establish such a procedure.

Where the assessment modality allows, student work is processed using Turnitin. The institution requires originality of 80%, any less and the student will be required to resubmit. If a student is found to have plagiarised on the second attempt another chance to redo the task is provided, but after the third attempt they fail the module. The lecturer makes a determination in relation to intent and where a student is considered to have made a blatant attempt to cheat, the mark for the second attempt is capped. The panel also discussed academic ethics for the institution's use of MCQ assessment and found that there are currently no arrangements to secure the authenticity of student work. Currently, these tests are conducted remotely and there is the possibility of collusion, with no means to detect this form of cheating should it occur. There appears to be a need for a more comprehensive process to address various types of academic misconduct because students may not always be aware of various aspects of academic integrity. The panel recommends the design of a document that aims to address various breaches of academic integrity, including plagiarism and cheating.

The institution also outlined their position in relation to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in relation to assessment. MLI had an instance where staff had told students that it was permitted to use Chat GPT, although this was not the formal policy position. In that instance, the institution did not penalise the cohort because it wasn't made clear to students that AI use was prohibited. Students are no longer allowed to use AI-generative software for any contribution to assessment and this is made clear at the start of each module. Staff also explained that they had changed their approach to assessment to focus less on description and more on students' own personal practice. The institution intends to review assignment titles/briefs in accordance with this approach and the panel commends the intention to make greater use of authentic assessment.

The panel was not able to ascertain student satisfaction with the assessment load, modality or feedback.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR10: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, ensure that the quality insurance policy involves teaching and learning matters to demonstrate the effectiveness of these courses.
- MR11: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, incorporate into module outlines explanations and justifications for the utilisation of diverse learning pedagogies and assessment methods.
- MR12: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, ensure to use rubrics for evaluation purposes in order to give specific feedback to students.
- MR13: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, ensure that the academic integrity of assessment methodology is in place.
- R4: Regular training sessions focusing on academic integrity could be provided to both faculty and students.

Conclusion

MLI does not meet the requirements of Section B.

Section C – Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

C1 Student Admission Regulations

Main Findings

MLI exhibits well-defined and transparent admission regulations. Prospective students have comprehensive online access to all necessary information concerning the admission process, including requirements, timelines and selection criteria. This ensures that applicants are fully aware and comprehend what will be expected from them while on the course.

Students apply online and have access to all the details pertaining to the entry requirements. Students complete the application, following which they send it together with any supporting documentation (such as previous transcripts and certificates) to the MLI administrator, who is based in India. Nonetheless, the panel was informed by the institution that student data is kept on Google servers that reside in the EU, in compliance with Maltese/European GDPR legislation. On his/her behalf, the administrator then screens the documentation and, when they are accepted, students receive an email with the offer.

Once they receive their invitation to enrol, students are then required to pay the deposit and the institution will, at that point, issue the letter of acceptance. Following acceptance, students are enrolled on the MLI online system, and each student will have a central file opened in their name. This is followed by an induction process which takes place face to face; a fact the panel found positive. Students are also given access to a teaching schedule (which is available on the portal), as well as various types of information, including academic misconduct, extensions, use of the online platforms and assessment.

The 20- and 30-week programmes are presented in detail on the website. The panel noted that with regard to the 30-week course, the information is not accurate, in the sense that only 29 ECTS are listed when it should be 30.

Good Practice Identified

- MLI implements a student-centric admission process characterised by user-friendliness and adaptability.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Main Findings

The panel noted that at MLI, at the moment, there are no published policies and procedures in place to sustain a proper two-way communication with students. Academic and administrative personnel explained to the panel that students contact them whenever they encounter a problem that influences their learning, as well as for administrative and/or IT issues.

The panel noted that there is no evidence of strong collaboration between the departments, specifically interdepartmental collaboration with the Admissions Department, that could demonstrate a coordinated institution-wide effort to manage student progression. The progression process is somehow isolated to a single department – the administration one. Ultimately it is this department which determines whether a student moves from one module to the next as well as from one programme to the other.

The panel notes that the absence of published communication policies and procedures poses a significant issue for the institution. This deficiency leads to a lack of clarity and consistency in student-staff interactions, potentially causing confusion and varied responses. It also hampers efficiency and timeliness in addressing student concerns, risking delays in resolving academic, administrative, or IT issues. Additionally, the lack of accountability and documentation, coupled with the potential for miscommunication through informal channels, raises concerns about adherence to best practices in communication.

Addressing this issue is crucial for the institution's commitment to quality. Developing and implementing comprehensive communication policies and procedures is essential, especially since it can directly impact the progression of students. This not only establishes clear expectations for students but also ensures efficiency, accountability and adherence to quality assurance standards, ultimately contributing to a positive and supportive learning environment.

Some form of support is being offered to students who are lagging behind in their studies, but there are no specialised personal services (e.g., student counsellor on which the student can rely in case of need). The only members of staff responsible for support are the administration and the teaching personnel.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- R5: MLI could consider including possible course progression routes for students wishing to further their studies.
- KR4: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, delegate the management of students' progression and advising to dedicated Student Advisors.
- R6: The role of Programme Coordinator could be introduced. For each programme offered, a different full-time member should undertake the role of Programme Coordinator.

C3 Student Recognition

Main Findings

The panel was not provided with any evidence as to whether the institution intends to offer a chance for students to advance in their studies by leveraging their current knowledge and skills, in line with lifelong learning principles and encouraging a broader and more diverse student community.

The panel observed that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanisms are not currently employed in the admission process for these specific programmes, nor are they utilised for exemptions in the corresponding LSE courses.

The panel encourages the institution to consider the potential advantages of incorporating RPL into part-time courses and potentially extending its application to LSE courses. RPL serves as a valuable tool for acknowledging and accrediting students for their pre-existing knowledge and skills, fostering inclusivity and efficiency.

Given that Learning Support Educators often engage with a diverse group of learners, recognising prior learning becomes crucial in acknowledging and valuing this diversity. Additionally, part-time courses tend to attract adult learners with substantial work experience. Recognising their prior learning helps tailor educational content to align with the unique needs and experiences of these students. Specifically, RPL aids in the development and implementation of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) by acknowledging the existing skills and knowledge of students, thus contributing to a personalised approach that is integral to effective inclusion practices.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

R7: Further exploration of the potential benefits of recognising prior learning in part-time courses and exemptions in LSE courses could enhance the institution's approach to student recognition.

C4 Student Certification

Main Findings

MLI awards certifications upon successful course completion as outlined in the programme documentation and endorsed by the MFHEA. Criteria for grading, assessment and academic standards attained are outlined in the Rules and Regulations available online.

In addition to the programme completion certificate, the institution furnishes students with a course transcript as part of the Diploma Supplement, formatted in accordance with the European standard. This transcript comprehensively lists all study units and their corresponding grades or marks achieved throughout the course. Apart from serving as a record of academic achievement, this document details a student's academic journey, beneficial for those pursuing further studies or seeking professional employment opportunities.

Transcripts are compiled by the administrator based in India and issued by the head of the institution. Scanned versions are held by the institution for instances where graduates request replacement copies.

Good Practice Identified

- The institution possesses a follow-up process to tackle issues regarding certification.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Conclusion

MLI meets the requirements for Section C.

Section D – Teaching Staff

D1 Teaching Staff Recruitment

Main Findings

MLI issues an open call for lecturing staff, following which the head of the institution will receive the curriculum vitae of applicants. The panel was informed that a recruitment process is initiated which leads to the selection of a candidate/s. The details of this process are unclear to the panel. The panel is also unclear whether the institution has a strategic plan in place with regard to its human resources capabilities. MLI currently has a significant number of staff who have been with the institution for an extended period and has recently recruited some alumni for specific teaching roles. The panel noted that, currently, there is no strategy available to map all the ways MLI has in order to attract new lecturers. It is also not clear to the panel which channels are used to advertise such positions.

According to the list of personnel put at the disposal of the panel, all lecturers are professional in the field of study. Also, it was noted that MLI occasionally provides professional development opportunities for both full-time and part-time teachers, with additional prospects for Erasmus opportunities.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- KR5: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, devise a recruitment strategy for the short and long terms.
- KR6: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, document a recruitment process which should be followed in all future recruitment initiatives.

D2 Teaching Staff Numbers and Academic Background

Main Findings

The instructional team at MLI comprises academically qualified individuals, many of whom possess extensive practical experience in the field. All teaching staff assigned to a course meet the requisite qualifications outlined in the recruitment criteria, ensuring their competence to effectively deliver course content and support student learning.

The panel also noted that lecturers employed by the institution hold qualifications that generally exceed the level of the assigned course by at least one step. Most lecturers have a Master's degree in the field of education. This ensures that lecturers possess an adequate understanding of the subject matter and the ability to impart knowledge effectively to students at that particular level.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

D3 Teaching Staff Professional Development

Main Findings

MLI prioritises cultivating a culture of ongoing learning and continual professional growth among its academic members of staff. Lecturers have confirmed active participation in professional development programmes aimed at refining their teaching methodologies, expanding subject expertise, and staying abreast of evolving educational trends. This practice ensures that the teaching techniques and content delivered remain current, pertinent and impactful.

The panel observed that there are no protocols for peer observation within the academic community at MLI. Sharing good practices through observation of peers empowers staff and provides them with the opportunity to glean insights from the teaching practices of their

colleagues. It also provides members of staff with the opportunity to foster constructive feedback and facilitate personal growth and development among academics.

While the possibility of enrolling in Erasmus projects allows lecturers to participate in international learning exchanges, it would be more pertinent if lecturers, through MLI, could specifically apply for Erasmus teaching assignments. Therefore, MLI should actively facilitate lecturers' access to participate in Erasmus Teaching and Training mobility programmes.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

KR7: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop and establish procedures for peer observation among academics. This may enable staff to observe and learn from others' teaching practices and engage in constructive feedback and at the same time can contribute to personal growth and development amongst academics.

R8: MLI could facilitate lecturers' access to enrol onto the Erasmus Teaching and Training mobility programmes.

Conclusion

MLI needs improvement to meet the requirements of Section D.

Section E – Learning Resources and Student Support

E1 Learning Environment

Main Findings

The learning environment is suitably designed and, generally, the standards for the teaching and learning environment are met. The panel was informed that the 20- and 30-week programmes are delivered almost entirely online. Following an analysis by the panel of the institution's Learning Management System (LMS), the panel concluded that suitable technical resources are in place to support this primarily online learning and teaching pedagogy. The structure of the LMS is intuitive and while the panel was not able to triangulate this with students themselves, it concluded that the system was accessible and in line with their needs. Having said that, the panel still has a number of reservations in relation to the extent to which the online modality is the ideal platform to teach all the aspects pertaining to these courses and, in particular, the practical aspects/skills utilised by a Learning Support Educator on a daily basis.

Students have access to online resources through the online library that is centrally updated. An administrative officer supports and provides counselling services whenever these are needed.

Unfortunately, during the onsite visit the panel did not have the opportunity to meet with students or alumni from the different programmes, so their feedback and conclusions could not be taken into consideration.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Main Findings

As noted under E1, online resources are considered appropriate. The panel also visited the institution's premises which include a small number of suitable and well-furnished classrooms and offices. These are used for the induction phases during the 20- and 30-week programmes but not routinely for teaching and learning.

MLI uses the EBSCO platform to provide learning resources to learners. The panel was also informed that resources acquired by the institution are on a need basis. This process is controlled entirely by the head of the institution and the panel was unable to identify whether or how ring-fenced funding was implemented. The panel was also not in a position to conclude how and when formal requests for funding are normally raised and by whom.

Due to the fact that the courses are all online, the physical resources put at the disposal of students are very limited. Students who need further assistance are at liberty to go to the MLI premises for additional support. It is also not clear to the panel the extent (if any) or type of this support.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- R9: MLI could consider opening their spaces for students who may need a space (such as a library) to study for the duration of their course.
- R10: The institution could develop an explicit and transparent policy on resource allocation for learning resources and student support. This could be shared with both learners and members of the lecturing staff.

E3 Student Support

Main Findings

During the onsite visit, the panel met with the administrative staff at MLI and observed that the institution provides some form of support services to students, particularly when it comes to administrative matters. However, as pointed out above in this report, the panel was unable to directly gather students' feedback during the visit, as students were not made available. This absence of direct input from students hinders a comprehensive assessment of their experiences and perceptions regarding the support services offered by MLI. Due to this reason, it was very difficult for the panel to come to conclusions on this aspect.

As it stands, students at MLI have avenues for seeking support by reaching out to their module tutors or the institution's administrators. The institution does not provide support in the areas of counselling, disability support, career guidance, and other forms of addressing diverse student needs. Needless to say, addressing this gap in specialised support services could enhance the overall support structure and overall experience for MLI students, ensuring a more holistic approach to addressing their diverse needs.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

R11: The institution could provide for an institutionalised in-house outsource service for students experiencing psychological and emotional health issues.

Conclusion

MLI meets the requirements of Section E.

Section F – Information Management

F1 Information and Records

Main Findings

All learning material for both the 20- and 30-week courses is uploaded on the same learning management system - LMS e-learning portal utilised by students and lecturing staff alike. The utilisation of the LMS e-learning portal functions as a thorough platform for overseeing student records, encompassing various crucial aspects essential for efficient academic administration. This system not only stores vital personal information but also serves as a centralised repository for monitoring attendance and specific details related to students' enrolled courses. Essentially, the collaboration between the LMS e-learning portal and the curriculum facilitates effective record-keeping, granting academic staff and administrators immediate access to accurate, real-time information about each student's progress, attendance and programme particulars. This not only streamlines administrative processes but also enhances the institution's capability to monitor and support students effectively throughout their academic journey.

The assessment feature on the platform allows detailed tracking of student progression, including task-specific feedback from instructors. This contributes to comprehensive assessment records, aiding in the monitoring of students' academic journeys. Online profiles on the e-learning platform, accessible to relevant staff members, ensure the storage and availability of information for student cohorts following their respective courses.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Conclusion

MLI meets the requirements of Section F.

Section G – Public Information

G1 Course Information

Main Findings

The website of the MLI provides an overview of the programmes of the 20- and 30-week courses. It also provides information regarding requirement for graduation and programme learning outcomes.

Details about courses, including those pertaining to both the Facilitating and Adapting Education for Students with Diverse Needs, are readily available and easily accessible. The institution utilises social media platforms to engage with both current and prospective students. The provided information is clear, precise and regularly updated. This transparent approach empowers potential students to make well-informed decisions about their educational paths, covering crucial aspects such as admission criteria, course content, fees and assessment methods.

The transparency evident in the institution's publicised information, encompassing course overviews, programme contacts and conferred qualifications, contributes significantly to a positive learning experience and diminishes potential misunderstandings. Furnishing details on teaching and learning assessments, as well as pass rates, plays a pivotal role in ensuring quality assurance for the programmes. This information enables stakeholders, including both current and prospective students, to evaluate the programmes' effectiveness and success rates.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

R12: MLI could consider undertaking initiatives to increase the engagement rate on social media sites that may be appealing to future students.

Conclusion

The institution meets the requirement of Section G.

Response by the Provider

Preamble

This document serves as MLI's formal response to the findings and recommendations outlined in the Programme Audit Report. MLI acknowledges the thoroughness of the auditing team in assessing the programme, identifying areas for improvement, and recognising the strengths and achievements of the institution.

MLI is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic quality, learner support, and programme relevance. In this response, MLI addresses each recommendation provided in the audit report, detailing the actions taken or planned to align with the recommendations and to continuously enhance the programme.

This response reflects MLI's dedication to a culture of quality assurance and improvement. By actively engaging with the feedback provided, MLI aims to strengthen programme offerings, meet the needs of students and stakeholders, and uphold its institutional mission and values.

MLI appreciates the opportunity to review and improve its practices and looks forward to continued progress in achieving educational excellence.

Response to Key Recommendations and Recommendations Made by the Peer Review Panel

Action plan		
Recommendations	Actions to be taken to address the recommendations	Date for completion
Section A: Design and Development of Programme of Study		

A1 Policy for Quality Assurance

KR1: The QA Manager should be supported by specialised personnel. The resulting department/unit should continue to report to the head of the institution. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.

MLI has a team of internal verifiers representing the three sectors, reporting directly to the QA Manager. QA meetings are conducted regularly, and internal verification of all current courses has been completed. Additionally, a sample of assessments from every module (20–30%, as outlined in MLI's QA Manual) is verified before the publication of marks. Assessment tasks are also reviewed to ensure alignment with learning outcomes and adherence to assessment guidelines before they are provided to students.

As outlined in the MLI Council Governance Policy, MLI will develop several subcommittees during 2025, including one dedicated to Quality Assurance. The MLI Quality Assurance Subcommittee is responsible for upholding the highest quality standards in the institution's academic and operational aspects.

Mission Statement:

The MLI Quality Assurance Subcommittee strives to foster a culture of continuous improvement by ensuring excellence, compliance, and innovation across all institutional functions.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Continuously monitor compliance with the accreditation standards set by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), maintaining the Institute's good standing.
2. Regularly evaluate academic programmes to ensure they exceed established standards for educational quality and align with industry needs and best practices.
3. Design, implement, and update comprehensive quality assurance policies and procedures that promote excellence in the Institute's operations.
4. Oversee a systematic process for evaluating and improving academic programmes, identifying and addressing areas for improvement.
5. Promote a culture of continuous improvement, encouraging innovation in academic and administrative functions.
6. Facilitate professional development opportunities for lecturers and staff to enhance skills, improve teaching quality, and remain up-to-date in their fields.

7. Provide the MLI Council with regular reports, offering actionable recommendations to enhance academic and institutional quality.
8. Implement effective feedback mechanisms to gather input from students, staff, and external stakeholders, ensuring their perspectives inform quality assurance efforts.
9. Adhere strictly to internal review processes and external accreditation requirements, ensuring a continuous cycle of evaluation and improvement.

Through these measures, the MLI Quality Assurance Subcommittee aims to uphold MLI's commitment to excellence, innovation, and accountability at every institution level.

<p>Till June 2025R1: MLI should consider introducing a process whereby feedback is collected from educational institutions about their satisfaction level with MLI's students and graduates.</p>	<p>The Quality Assurance team has developed an external feedback questionnaire designed for distribution to Head of Schools. This questionnaire aims to gather valuable insights from external stakeholders to enhance academic and operational standards. To reach a broad and representative audience, the Administration Officer coordinates with students and distributes the Jotform to them accordingly.</p> <p>The process has already been initiated for B.Ed cohorts 11 and 12, with the sample size determined using the Raosoft calculator to ensure statistical accuracy and representativeness. These efforts are part of a systematic approach to incorporating stakeholder perspectives into continuously improving the institution's programmes and services.</p>	<p>End of January 2025</p>
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A2 Design and Development of Programmes		
<p>KR2: The individual modules/courses of the programmes should address all required learning objectives defined for the programmes overall. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.</p>	<p>All assessments undergo internal verification before being distributed to students. Lecturers are required to submit their assessment questions to the Academic Manager, who collaborates with internal verifiers to review them. Together, they ensure that the assessments meet all learning objectives and comply with established guidelines. This process ensures consistency, fairness, and alignment with the institution's academic standards.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>KR3: The programmes' goals/learning outcomes and learning objectives should follow and reflect national and international good practices. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.</p>	<p>MLI aims to implement its 20-week and 30-week programmes as structured work-based learning opportunities, designed to provide students with practical, hands-on experience that aligns with industry standards. These programmes are intended to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, enhancing students' employability and preparing them for career success.</p> <p>A comprehensive review will be conducted between June and December 2025 to ensure the programmes remain practical and relevant. This review will evaluate the programme's alignment with industry needs, their impact on student outcomes, and opportunities for further improvement.</p>	<p>June-December 2025</p>
A3 Internal Review – Monitoring and Periodic Review		
<p>R2: MLI could take into consideration the constant updating of the content of the modules.</p>	<p>Between June and December 2025, both the 20-week and 30-week programmes will undergo a comprehensive review to assess their effectiveness, alignment with industry standards, and overall impact on student outcomes.</p>	<p>June-December 2025</p>
Section B – Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment		
B1 Teaching and Learning Strategies		
<p>R3: MLI could ensure that the online modality is being reflected upon. Indeed the institution could reflect on whether the online modality serves students' learning needs and those of the indirect beneficiaries – the pupils.</p>	<p>MLI is committed to improving online teaching practices by gathering student, lecturer, and stakeholder feedback through surveys and interviews. This feedback, combined with an analysis of learning outcomes, will help identify gaps in effectiveness and areas for improvement. Based on these findings, MLI could refine its teaching methods, provide targeted training for staff, and adopt innovative strategies to enhance student engagement and</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

	learning experiences.	
B2 Student Assessment		
R4: Regular training sessions focusing on academic integrity could be provided to both faculty and students.	<p>All students enrolled in the course must complete the 'Academic Reading and Writing' module, designed to strengthen their referencing skills and effective use of academic sources. By providing students with the tools needed for academic success, this module ensures consistency and high standards in scholarly work across the institution.</p> <p>MLI organises two to three professional training sessions annually to complement student development for lecturers, support their growth, and maintain alignment with institutional standards. On 07th September 2024, an afternoon training session focused on quality assurance was held, with approximately 35 lecturers in attendance. During the session, a key focus was placed on the importance of including assessment rubrics as part of feedback to enhance clarity and fairness in the grading process. These initiatives reflect MLI's ongoing commitment to fostering excellence in teaching and academic integrity.</p>	Completed
Section C – Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification		
C2 Student Progression		
R5: MLI could consider including possible course progression routes for students wishing to further their studies.	<p>The course information template MLI provides to students before application includes details about career pathways, outlining potential opportunities for further studies after completing the course. This valuable information is also included in the transcript upon course completion, ensuring students clearly understand their options.</p> <p>To further enhance accessibility and transparency, MLI should consider making this information available on its website. By doing so, prospective and current students would have easier access to career pathway details, empowering them to make informed decisions about their education and future goals.</p>	Completed
KR4: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, delegate the management of students' progression and advising to dedicated Student Advisors.	As part of its commitment to inclusivity and shared governance, MLI will establish a Student Board Subcommittee next year and include student representation in the MLI Council. By giving students an active voice in institutional decision-making, MLI aims to promote transparency and align its policies with the needs of its student body.	June 2025

<p>R6: The role of Programme Coordinator could be introduced. For each programme offered, a different full-time member should undertake the role of Programme Coordinator.</p>	<p>While appointing a full-time Programme Coordinator for each programme may not be feasible for MLI at this stage, the institution is committed to strengthening programme management and governance. MLI will establish a Programme Design and Review Subcommittee to achieve this, as outlined in the MLI Council governance policy. This subcommittee will ensure the quality, consistency, and continuous improvement of all programmes by working closely with existing staff members who take on programme coordination responsibilities alongside their current roles. Through this collaborative approach, MLI aims to enhance oversight, maintain high standards, and support the ongoing development of its academic offerings.</p>	<p>June 2025</p>
<p>C3 Student Recognition</p>		
<p>R7: Further exploration of the potential benefits of recognising prior learning in part-time courses and exemptions in LSE courses could enhance the institution's approach to student recognition.</p>	<p>MLI has a robust Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) framework designed to support the unique needs of part-time students by recognising their prior achievements and offering course exemptions. Since all MLI students study part-time, this system plays a vital role in facilitating their academic progression. To ensure the RPL process remains effective, accessible, and visible during the application stage, MLI conducts regular reviews and seeks opportunities to enhance its implementation.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Section D – Teaching Staff</p>		
<p>D1 Teaching Staff Recruitment</p>		
<p>KR5: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, devise a recruitment strategy for the short and long terms.</p>	<p>As recommended, MLI is committed to developing a comprehensive recruitment strategy within the next 12 months. This strategy will address immediate staffing needs while supporting long-term goals such as workforce planning, talent development, and alignment with the institution's growth objectives. To achieve this, MLI will conduct a thorough analysis of current recruitment challenges, identify key roles and competencies required for future success, and adopt innovative approaches to attract and retain top talent. By implementing this strategy, MLI aims to build a strong, dynamic workforce that supports the institution's mission and future</p>	<p>June 2025</p>

	growth.	
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<p>KR6: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, document a recruitment process which should be followed in all future recruitment initiatives.</p>	<p>In response to the recommendation, MLI will formalise its recruitment process by documenting a comprehensive policy within the next 12 months. Currently, recruitment relies on MLI's social media platforms and website postings, which will be captured in the new standardised policy to ensure clarity, transparency, and consistency in all future recruitment efforts.</p> <p>Looking ahead, MLI will explore adopting additional tools and platforms to streamline and enhance the recruitment process further. By aligning its practices with the industry's best standards, MLI aims to attract top talent, support institutional growth, and build a workforce that reflects its commitment to excellence and innovation.</p>	<p>June 2025</p>
<p>D3 Teaching Staff Professional Development</p>		
<p>KR7: MLI should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop and establish procedures for peer observation among academics. This may enable staff to observe and learn from others' teaching practices and engage in constructive feedback and at the same time can contribute to personal growth and development amongst academics.</p>	<p>MLI conducts regular tutor observations to support teaching quality and ensure alignment with institutional standards. Feedback from these observations is documented on a tutor observation feedback form, which is reviewed and signed by the respective lecturer. This process is formalised in the QA manual and lecturers' contracts, reflecting MLI's commitment to fostering continuous improvement and professional development.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>R8: MLI could facilitate lecturers' access to enrol onto the Erasmus Teaching and Training mobility programmes.</p>	<p>Erasmus opportunities, including student exchanges and internships, are shared through the Learning Management System (LMS) to ensure accessibility. Additionally, information sessions are conducted to provide interested students with detailed guidance and support. These efforts encourage international experiences, broaden student horizons, and enhance academic and professional development.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Section E – Learning Resources and Student Support		
E2 Facilities and Learning Resources		
R9: MLI could consider opening their spaces for students who may need a space (such as a library) to study for the duration of their course.	<p>Although MLI offers courses exclusively online, it has undertaken a refurbishment to create a supportive and inspiring physical space for students needing a place to study during their course. The reception area has been relocated to the ground floor. In contrast, the upper floor has been transformed into a comfortable study space, featuring a sofa, vibrant wall art with an inspirational quote, and newly added tables and chairs.</p> <p>In addition, MLI is establishing a physical library to further support students in their academic journey. The library will house all of the theses and, over time, a growing collection of books tailored to students’ academic needs, reinforcing MLI’s commitment to providing resources for success.</p>	Completed
R10: The institution could develop an explicit and transparent policy on resource allocation for learning resources and student support. This could be shared with both learners and members of the lecturing staff.	MLI will develop a clear, detailed policy outlining allocating resources for learning materials and student support. This policy will enhance transparency, ensure equitable access to academic resources, and foster trust across the academic community. Once finalised, the policy will be shared with students and staff via the institution’s website and internal communications, ensuring all stakeholders are informed and aligned with MLI’s commitment to supporting academic success.	June 2025
E3 Student Support		
R11: The institution could provide for an institutionalised in-house outsource service for students experiencing psychological and emotional health issues.	As MLI is still an SME, establishing a fully institutionalised in-house psychological and emotional support service has yet to be feasible. Instead, the institution could engage a qualified professional to support students facing mental health challenges. This practical approach ensures that students access essential care while remaining aligned with MLI’s available resources and commitment to fostering student well-being.	
Section G – Public Information		
G1 Course Information		
R12: MLI could consider undertaking initiatives to increase the engagement rate on social media sites that	MLI actively conveys student testimonials on social media platforms to increase engagement and highlight their experiences and success stories. Additionally, the institution is creating TikTok videos on various topics to capture the	Completed

<p>may be appealing to future students.</p>	<p>attention of prospective students with relatable and engaging content. These efforts are part of MLI's broader strategy to enhance its online presence and connect more effectively with future students.</p> <p>Looking ahead, MLI could further expand its reach by collaborating with student ambassadors or influencers to promote its courses and activities. Such partnerships would increase visibility and strengthen the institution's appeal to a broader audience by leveraging authentic, peer-driven endorsements.</p>	
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Response to Mandatory Recommendations made by the Peer Review Panel

Action Plan		
Mandatory Recommendations	Actions to be taken to address the recommendations	Date for completion
Section A: Design and Development of Programme of Study		
A1 Policy for Quality Assurance		
MR1: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, distribute roles related to QA (in particular, assign a QA coordinator). The QA Department shall ensure that the roles, responsibilities and authority are also visible in documented processes and academic bodies.	As an SME, MLI currently has a limited capacity to dedicate a full-time employee exclusively to Quality Assurance. However, QA remains a key priority and is overseen by the Academic Manager, whose responsibilities include managing and ensuring the quality of all institutional processes. Additionally, internal verifiers, in collaboration with the Heads of Schools, play an integral role in supporting and facilitating QA activities. This collaborative approach ensures that MLI maintains high academic standards and fosters a culture of continuous improvement.	Completed
MR2: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, refocus the main responsibility of the QA Department from ensuring MFHEA accreditation to an ongoing, internal QA improvement process that will enable future improvements in QA.	As an SME, MLI does not currently have the capacity to dedicate a full-time employee exclusively to Quality Assurance. However, QA remains a key priority and is overseen by the Academic Manager, whose responsibilities include managing and ensuring the quality of all institutional processes. Additionally, internal verifiers, in collaboration with the Head of Schools, play an integral role in supporting and facilitating QA activities. This collaborative approach ensures that MLI maintains high academic standards and fosters a culture of continuous improvement.	Completed
MR3: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, design, develop and maintain a system for internal QA forms and processes.	MLI has implemented a structured review process for assessments to ensure quality and accuracy before they are distributed to students. Lecturers must correct evaluations within 4 weeks of the exam or assignment date, after which internal verifiers are allocated 2 weeks to sample and thoroughly review the assessments. This review ensures consistency, alignment with learning objectives, and adherence to assessment standards. Internal verifiers also provide detailed feedback to lecturers, allowing for necessary adjustments or improvements before the assessments are finalised.	Completed

	This process ensures fairness, maintains academic integrity, and upholds MLI's commitment to delivering high-quality education.	
A2 Design and Development of Programmes		
MR4: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, institutionalise the role of an Academic Manager with full authority and responsibility.	<p>Ms. Nicole Borg joined MLI as Academic Manager in April 2024 and plays a pivotal role in overseeing the institution's academic and quality assurance processes. She ensures rigorous compliance with accreditation standards, systematically reports on programme effectiveness, and leads strategic initiatives to drive continuous improvement.</p> <p>In addition to managing academic programmes, Ms. Borg supports professional development for lecturers and staff, provides guidance to students, and fosters collaboration with industry partners, academic peers, and internal stakeholders. Her efforts align MLI's educational offerings with external expectations and opportunities, ensuring excellence in both academic and operational standards.</p>	Completed
MR5: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, redesign the programmes' learning goals and learning outcomes together with the development of clear road-mapping for each module for students' suggested pathway for the programmes.	<p>MLI aims to implement its 20-week and 30-week programmes as work-based learning opportunities, providing students with practical, hands-on experience that aligns with industry standards. These programmes are designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, equipping students with the skills and confidence needed for their future careers.</p> <p>To ensure these programmes continue to meet the evolving needs of students and industry partners, they will undergo a comprehensive review between June and December 2025. This review will focus on maintaining quality, aligning with best practices, and identifying opportunities for improvement, reinforcing MLI's commitment to excellence in education and student success.</p>	June-December 2025
A3 Internal Review – Monitoring and Periodic Review		
MR6: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop and implement consistent and robust annual monitoring and periodic review processes for module content.	This year, the 20- and 30-week modules underwent internal verification, resulting in the implementation of an action plan to address identified areas for improvement. To further enhance programme quality, a comprehensive review of the entire bachelor's course, including the 20- and 30-week modules, is planned. This review will ensure consistent monitoring, alignment with learning objectives, and periodic evaluation of module content, reinforcing MLI's commitment to providing high-quality education and continuous improvement.	June-December 2025

<p>MR7: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop a formal based approach to formally capture the feedback from all parties involved.</p>	<p>Student feedback is collected after each module through a module feedback survey, with lecturers dedicating the last 10 minutes of the final lecture to ensure participation. Additionally, structured interviews are conducted with students both during their course and after its completion to gather more profound insights into their experiences.</p> <p>Internal verifiers, who are also lecturers, contribute input and suggestions as part of the overall QA reporting process. This year, internal verification has been completed for both programmes, ensuring consistency and alignment with institutional standards.</p> <p>Relevant stakeholders, including Heads of Schools and Assistant Heads are contacted via questionnaire to incorporate external perspectives. These combined efforts reflect MLI's commitment to continuous improvement, ensuring that feedback from students, staff, and external stakeholders informs the development of high-quality programmes and enhances the student experience.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>MR8: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, implement a communication strategy and mechanisms for support for both teachers and students.</p>	<p>MLI facilitates open communication by providing students and lecturers multiple channels to contact staff, including the Learning Management System (LMS), email, and telephone. A dedicated LMS group for lecturers has been created to further support collaboration where important announcements are shared. This group also allows lecturers to post queries and engage with their peers' comments, fostering a sense of community and encouraging knowledge-sharing.</p> <p>These communication tools ensure accessibility, promote collaboration and align with MLI's commitment to creating a supportive and connected academic environment.</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Section B – Student-centered Learning, Teaching and Assessment</p>		
<p>B1 Teaching and Learning Strategies</p>		
<p>MR9: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, collect feedback from the students in order to assess the quality of teaching.</p>	<p>In response to the recommendation, MLI has implemented a comprehensive feedback system to enhance teaching quality and support continuous improvement. Student feedback is collected after each module to evaluate teaching effectiveness, while structured interviews with current students provide deeper insights into their learning experience. Additionally, a graduate questionnaire is distributed to track career progression and gather valuable input on</p>	<p>Completed</p>

	<p>how MLI's programmes support professional success.</p> <p>These initiatives reflect MLI's commitment to maintaining high teaching standards, aligning educational offerings with career outcomes, and fostering student success at every stage.</p>	
B2 Student Assessment		
<p>MR10: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, ensure that the quality insurance policy involves teaching and learning matters to demonstrate the effectiveness of these courses.</p>	<p>In response to the recommendation, MLI has revised and updated its Quality Assurance (QA) Manual to strengthen both internal and external quality assurance processes. The updated policy provides a structured framework for evaluating and enhancing teaching and learning, ensuring the effectiveness of all courses.</p> <p>New elements have been incorporated, including provisions for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to support lecturers' professional growth and detailed procedures for managing online learning. These updates reflect MLI's commitment to adapting to modern educational needs and reinforce its dedication to maintaining high standards and delivering quality education to students.</p>	Completed
<p>MR11: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, incorporate into module outlines explanations and justifications for the utilisation of diverse learning pedagogies and assessment methods.</p>	<p>MLI plans to implement its 20-week and 30-week programmes as work-based learning opportunities, providing students with practical, hands-on experience that aligns with industry standards. These programmes equip students with the skills and confidence needed for their future careers, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application.</p> <p>To ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness, both programmes will be reviewed comprehensively between June and December 2025. This review will evaluate their alignment with industry needs, gather stakeholder feedback, and identify improvement opportunities, reinforcing MLI's commitment to excellence in education and student success.</p>	June-December 2025
<p>MR12: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, ensure to use rubrics for evaluation purposes in order to give specific feedback to students.</p>	<p>MLI has developed detailed rubrics for theses, assignments, examinations, and PowerPoint presentations to ensure clear and consistent evaluation criteria. During the lecturers' training session held on the 7th of September, it was agreed that rubrics must be uploaded as part of the feedback process. This initiative aims to provide students with transparent assessment guidelines while supporting lecturers in delivering structured and constructive</p>	Completed

	<p>feedback.</p> <p>By integrating rubrics into the feedback process, MLI reinforces its commitment to academic excellence, consistency in grading, and the continuous improvement of teaching and assessment practices.</p>	
<p>MR13: MLI shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, ensure that the academic integrity of assessment methodology is in place.</p>	<p>MLI is implementing a rigorous process to uphold the academic integrity of its assessments. Before being distributed to students, all assessment questions are submitted by lecturers through the Learning Management System (LMS) for verification. During this process, assessments are thoroughly reviewed to ensure alignment with learning outcomes and compliance with established guidelines.</p> <p>This systematic approach guarantees that all assessments meet the required standards, support the intended educational objectives, and reflect MLI's commitment to delivering high-quality, integrity-driven education.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

Annexes

Annex 1: Review Panel Bio Notes

In the setting up of the review panel for Malta Leadership Institute, the MFHEA sought to maintain a high degree of diligence in the process of selecting the members of the peer review panel. The panel is composed of specialists in quality assurance to act as external peers, professionals and practitioners of quality assurance frameworks, as well as students who, prior to the audits, attended professional training seminars organised by the MFHEA.

The following bio notes present the profiles of the members of the peer review panel. The bio notes are correct as at the time the QA audit was carried out, on 4th and 6th December 2023.

Chair of Review Panel: Dr Robert Cassar PhD

Dr Cassar is a quality assurance expert in education, with many years of direct experience in the field. His current role is that of Deputy Director with the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, in the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). Prior to his current position, Dr Cassar was an Education Officer, Regulatory for seven years. He was primarily involved in external reviews in compulsory education institutions as well as in childcare centres.

Before his involvement in quality assurance in education, Dr Cassar was an educator for over sixteen years working across a number of sectors. Between January 2009 and May 2013, Dr Cassar was also the liaison officer and course coordinator for a Chartered Institute of Marketing (UK) centre in Malta. The centre offered a variety of accredited CIM (UK) courses. Throughout the years, Dr Cassar also worked with numerous organisations, in various capacities, but mainly as a marketing consultant, project manager and/or evaluator. Following his doctorate studies in 'Media and Cultural Studies' in 2004, Dr Cassar published in various academic journals and continues to do so until today.

Since 2005, he has been appointed by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), to participate on its behalf, in various quality assurance panels. In August 2022, Dr Cassar was nominated and appointed to the European Schools Board of Inspectors in the capacity of Secondary Section inspector.

Peer Reviewer: Dr Elena Marin PhD

Dr Marin is senior lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest. She is in charge of several courses such as Inclusive Education, Learning and Cognition and Instructional Theories. Her main research focus is on inclusive education, initial teacher training system and the social dimension of higher education. Dr Marin has published several articles and a book on the topic of inclusive education, and is particularly interested in analysing how the initial teacher training systems are managing to respond to future teachers' needs to face inclusion in the classroom. Moreover, the interest spreads across higher education systems with an interest in pinpointing ways universities can become more accessible and inclusive. She partners in several Erasmus+ funded projects exploring inclusive education (COALITION and Co-Creating inclusive school communities, Oriental 4VET), as well as providing services as external evaluator for different national and international calls.

Peer Reviewer: Ms Marjoe Abela

Ms Abela is a passionate advocate for inclusive education and currently serves as the Service Manager for Student Services in the Secretariat for Catholic Education. With over two decades of experience, she has been instrumental in promoting equitable and supportive learning environments for students. Ms Abela's journey began as a Learning Support Educator in Kinder, Primary and Secondary schools, where she pioneered inclusive education. As Head of Department Inclusion, she strategised and implemented policies to foster inclusivity in classrooms and school-wide initiatives.

Ms Abela actively collaborates with educators, parents and communities to promote diversity and break down barriers. As the Service Manager for Student Services, she oversees comprehensive support programmes addressing educational, emotional and behavioural challenges. Beyond her professional role, Ms Abela volunteers with the Malta Girl Guides in different roles including quality assurance of adults training programme and young members' non-formal educational programme. She also serves on the administrative boards of the Church Schools Children's Fund, Malta CAN, and Fondazzjoni Wenz.

Student Peer Reviewer: Mr Matthew Kitching

Mr Kitching is currently a PhD student in Higher Education at Lancaster University, where his work focuses on international quality assurance and student leadership and development. In addition, he is Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Buckinghamshire New University. In this role he is responsible for wide ranging student support services including advice, representation, sport, volunteering and civic engagement. Mr Kitching also holds Board roles at several European quality assurance agencies, including the European Council for Business Education, where he is responsible for accreditation standards, site visits and training peer reviewers, and EQ-Arts, where he is serving as a researcher on a European funded project exploring urgent and emerging skills needs in the creative industries. He has extensive experience of conducting programme audits for a wide range of quality assurance agencies, across five continents, and of reviewing material related to inclusive education programmes. This includes as a panel secretary responsible for reports.

Annex 2: Agenda of the Online/Onsite Visit

4th December		
8.30 (30 m)	Panel preparation meeting for first day of the programme audit (at MFHEA Premises)	
9.00 (75 m)	CEO/Principal/QA MLI	Jesmond Friggieri (online)
10.15 (30 m)	Internal meeting	

6th December MLI		
9.45 (30 m)	Panel preparation meeting for second day of the programme audit (at MLI premises)	
10.15 (60 m)	Lecturers of 20- and 30-week courses	
11.15 (15 m)	Internal meeting	
11.30 (60 m)	Administrative staff/IT/Registrar, Student Services	
12.30 (150 m)	Lunch break plus any other additional meetings, tour of the premises and final internal meeting	
15.00 (45 m)	Alumni and students of 20- and 30-week courses (focus group) 5-8	No attendees
15.45 (15 m)	Internal meeting	
16.00 (15 m)	Final presentation	Jesmond Friggieri
16.15	Close second day	



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